

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for applying an ink image to a receiving material which is adapted to be advanced in a predetermined direction which comprises an ink application mechanism for applying an ink image to a strip of receiving material, said ink application mechanism extending in a direction transverse to the direction of advance of the receiving material such that a print range is provided; and

carrier means for keeping said strip in a predetermined position with respect to the ink application mechanism, said carrier means comprising a carrier plate for carrying said strip, said plate having channels extending in a direction substantially parallel to the direction of advance of the receiving material, wherein the carrier plate is provided with holes and air displacement means operatively associated with said holes for drawing air via said holes away from the space between the carrier plate and the strip of receiving material lying on the carrier plate

said holes being provided appear in the carrier plate at least in a portion thereof ~~in which a strip of the receiving material is maintained in a predetermined position with respect to the ink application mechanism which corresponds to said print range.~~

2. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein each channel has a width of between about 15 and 20 mm.

3. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the channels have channel walls which define an acute angle with a top surface of the carrier plate.

4. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the holes, when considered in the direction of advance of the receiving material, are situated predominantly at an upstream edge portion of the carrier plate.

5. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the holes are disposed in ribs which form the channels and lead into the top surface of each rib.

6. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the top surface of each rib is formed with a groove which extends from a hole provided in said rib to a downstream edge of the carrier plate.

7. (Currently Amended) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the carrier plate contains edge zones where side edges of a web of receiving material for processing may come into contact with the carrier plate, with and wherein the holes, in the edge zones, when considered in the direction of advance of the receiving material, extending over the entire length of the carrier plate.

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8. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the holes in the edge zones are formed in the channel walls which are situated on that side of the channels which is closest to the middle of the carrier plate.

9. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 8, wherein partitions are disposed in each channel in the edge zones at regular intervals from one another and extend transversely over the channel and their top is situated beneath the top edge of said channel.

10. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 9, wherein gutters are formed on the upstream and downstream sides of the edge zones and extend transversely with respect to the direction of advance of the receiving material and are in open communication with the channels in said edge zones.

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